A Value Co-Creation Perspective on Customer-Based Brand Equity Modelling for Tourism Destinations – A case from Sweden

Tatiana Chekalina
Avdelningen för turismvetenskap och geografi
MITTUNIVERSITETET
2015

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING
För avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen vid fakulteten för Humanvetenskap vid Mittuniversitetet, Campus Östersund, som offentligen kommer att försvaras i sal F229,
Onsdagen den 13 maj 2015, kl 13.15.

Opponent är professor William C. Gartner, University of Minnesota
A Value Co-Creation Perspective on Customer-Based Brand Equity Modelling for Tourism Destinations – A case from Sweden

Tatiana Chekalina
Department of Tourism Studies and Geography, Faculty of Human Sciences
Mid Sweden University, SE-831 25 Östersund, Sweden.

Abstract

Tourism destinations all over the world increasingly embrace marketing and branding practices traditionally utilized by businesses. However, the literature on customer-based brand equity modelling and measurement for tourism destinations lacks the conceptual understanding of the complex relationships between tourists and the destination brand.

Therefore, the thesis at hand addresses the existing gap in tourism literature and aims at contributing to the development of the customer-based brand equity concept in a tourism destination setting (CBDBE) by taking into account the value-co-creation approach. The components of the proposed model consist of the customers’ evaluation of the destination promise in terms of transforming functional, intangible and social destination resources into tourists’ value-in-use. Furthermore, the positive relationship between visitors’ perception of the destination and value-for-money discloses the input of tourists’ own resources into the process of value-co-creation. Moreover, destination brand awareness affects the evaluation of the destination promise, which, in turn, determines tourists’ behavioural intentions towards the destination.

By implementing web-based customer surveys and using a linear structural equation modelling approach, the proposed model is empirically validated for the leading Swedish mountain destination Åre. First, the model is repeatedly tested with data regarding the winter seasons 2009/10 and 2012/13. Second, the proposed CBDBE model has been operationalized and tested also for the summer season. Findings from face-to-face interviews conducted in Åre during summer 2012 uncovered the relationships between destination resources offered in Åre, tourists’
own resources and destination value-in-use and, thus, served as the empirical fundament for the development of a destination-specific scale to measure value-in-use. Subsequently, the proposed CBDBE model has been successfully tested with web-based survey data collected after the summer season 2012, both for the total sample and separately for the main a priori tourist segments, including hiking, mountain biking and village tourists.

Results show the significant contribution of destination value-in-use defined as perceived benefits from a destination stay, which, in turn, strongly affect customers’ destination loyalty. In contrast, the relationship between value-for-money and destination loyalty is less strong and even non-significant for the two customer segments hiking and mountain biking tourists. Importantly, as part of the CBDBE model operationalization, the thesis highlights the need to better understand destination-specific consumption patterns across various tourism segments by destination managers.

Therefore, results demonstrate that by monitoring unique destination and tourist-specific experience dimensions, destination management can influence and better manage both the value-in-use for customers and customer loyalty. Thus, the proposed CBDBE model provides destination managers with a tool, which enables evaluation and upgrade of destination marketing strategy and, finally, assist in discovering promising innovation potentials for highly experiential tourism products.

Keywords:
Destination branding, customer-based brand equity, value co-creation, value-in-use, Åre, linear structural equation modelling